

DAUNTSEY PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes

of the **Annual Parish Meeting** held on

Monday 7th April 2025

at

Brinkworth Earl Danby's Lower School Hall, Dauntsey - 7.30pm

Present: Parish Cllrs Ellen Blacker BEM (Chairman), Diane Wood (Vice Chairman), Andy Bond, Chris Farr, Rose Gregory and Graeme Wood. Wiltshire Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, also Phil Bate, Mike Blacker, Andrew Chapman, Theresa Chapman, Catherine Harris, Felicity Reynolds and Mr V Vines MBE Clerk of the Council.

MIN 1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Margi Histed and Cecil Smith.

MIN 2. Annual Parish Meeting 2024:

Draft Minutes from the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 8th April 2024 were tabled.

Chris Farr proposed, Graeme Wood seconded, and it was unanimously RESOLVED to receive, approve and sign as a true record the Minutes from the above Meeting. The Parish Council Chairman duly signed the Minutes.

MIN 3. Chairman's Report:

Cllr Ellen Blacker, welcomed all to the Annual Parish Meeting for 2025 and reminded all that every year we have this meeting in April with varying attendance over the years and she was really pleased that whilst low, it has improved on some years in the past.

Due to ill health, Di kindly stood in for her at last year's meeting and her thanks go to her for acting as Chairman for this and several other meetings.

Looking back at 2024/5, we have had a busy year with significant projects completed in time for the end of this Parish Council's term of office.

The Rec plans were developed over many meetings, Graeme and Di led on this and consulted with the community, sought proposals and quotes followed by numerous grant applications to apply for funding to realise our aims to provide play equipment for older children at the Rec replacing the old equipment and hoping to encourage all ages to visit and enjoy this facility. I am really pleased to report that the funding and our Parish savings meant that we could spend the £77,633.00 of which we can claim back VAT so costing about £65,000.00 and we now have a superb play area suitable for all ages, including adults with the outdoor gym equipment installation.

The litter bins installed by us a couple of years back were/are used to excess and after much debate, Wiltshire Council have taken on the responsibility of providing the emptying service. Being done weekly has kept the area tidy and clean.

The new signposts commemorating the diamond jubilee of our late Queen and the coronation of our new King have been well received and the envy of neighbouring parishes.

Most recently we looked forward to the re-opening of the B4069, the Banks, which happened just last week. For over 3 years our community has suffered the diversions and the heavy traffic using the side roads. It will be the task of the incoming Parish Council to ensure that our roads and verges are restored to an acceptable standard.

Speeding – still an issue and David Bullard is dedicated to reviewing the data provided by our AutoSpeedwatch device and Mike Blacker retrieves the data from the SID devices. Sadly, without more support from Wiltshire Police, there is little improvement. David continues to plead our case and encourage our PCC to take on the attitude of neighbouring Gloucester Police who use the ASW data to send letters to owners of speeding vehicles. I need to emphasise here that David spends in excess of an hour every day verifying data. It is a huge effort which should be commended and more importantly acted upon by our Police force. Gloucester Police do, why can't Wiltshire? Are we less important?

Of course, not everything has been successful this year. Great Middle Green Farm development is still not completed, and we continue to await the developer to finalise the work which should have been done back in 2003 ish. Will it ever happen? Our Wiltshire Councillor, Elizabeth Threlfall continues to push for action, but without any success. Sadly, it appears that only expensive legal action could resolve the situation.

Flooding issues continue to be of great concern. There has been some progress and the scheme to the south of the M4 seems to be well on the way to being done. Despite some scepticism from some members of our community, the proof will be evident when we have heavy rainfall. I find it very disappointing that the Parish Council pleas for community support to form a Flood Warden group had so little interest. I understand that neighbours have been brilliant and supported each other during times of flood, but the Parish really needs to be better prepared – prevention is better than cure! We have copies of household emergency plan suggestions which are a guide on what may be helpful should the worst happen. Our minds are focused on flooding, but a recent total house fire must rate as “the worst”. Preparing for devastation is next to impossible as we simply can't forecast what it could be. However, if your home has flooded, keeping some gel sacks around should be a good idea and we know some are doing this. The Parish Council have been active and do hold a small stock of these sacks, but it must be emphasised that they are for those who cannot have known the rainfall could affect them. Meanwhile, once again, Howard Goff and Wiltshire Councillor Nic Puntis have worked tirelessly with national agencies to keep Dauntsey and its flood problems in the forefront of their maintenance and development schedules and we thank them for this work.

The other major thing on the horizon was the proposal for a solar farm on our boundary with Christian Malford which was refused. The proposals for The Lime Down Solar farm are still under discussion. Love them or hate them, unless we all reduce our electricity consumption, something has to be done. Perhaps the country feel that mini nuclear power stations are a better option?

At our last APM, members of the public were keen to enter the Best Kept Village Competition and continue with the Parish Awards event introduced by Elizabeth Bond during her time as a Councillor. Sadly, no one came forward to help with this and so there are no awards for 2024. The Council were disappointed by this but decided that neither will be happening this year. We hope that someone will take up the challenge in the future. Meanwhile, we are keen to continue to support the Wheelbarrow Competition which brings some extra colour and interest over the summer.

Andy has done much towards the care and upkeep of the footpaths in the area, but it's a massive task and more help is needed as maintenance is ongoing and an uphill struggle for a single volunteer. Could it be that the Parish Council raise the precept in order to employ a contractor to help with the task?

I must emphasise that there is a greater reliance on individuals reporting problems, or perceived problems. We can and must ALL take responsibility to report potholes, blocked drains, missing white lines, blind spots at junctions etc. It is not the sole responsibility of a Parish Council to do this and it is better reported twice than not at all.

The Parish Council ensure that there is salt/grit in the bins around this area, but who accesses them in icy weather to help make the roads safer in the locations where the bins are?

At this time, I must thank all who have helped in whatever way for Dauntsey. The litter pickers, the verge strimmers, the drivers and co-ordinators who organise our LINK transport, the folk who submit, edit, organise and deliver our Pump magazines, the person who cleans the noticeboard fronts, the list goes on and on. We are so lucky to have these people who share the work to improve our community.

All of your Parish Councillors work hard, offering their time and skills as volunteers. A huge thank you to our Wiltshire Councillor, "Buff" who has, I believe, attended every meeting, frequently braving the criticism aimed at "the Wiltshire Council". She really does work hard for us. Thanks also to our Parish Steward who has a good relationship with Andy and Rose, our Councillors who he liaises with to carry out tasks. Whilst we only have his support for a few hours a year, he can fill small potholes, strim at junctions to improve visibility and clean signage. He is very approachable and keen to help where he can.

Lastly, the biggest thanks of all goes to Viv, our Clerk, who morphed from Councillor to Clerk some years ago and truly is the "glue" which holds us all together and within our legal responsibilities. I believe he has been looking out for Dauntsey for 48 years now and is as enthusiastic now as he always was.

So, at the end of this Council term, it's time to review things. My thanks go to all of the Councillors who have served during the last 4 years. We are a team and as such our decisions are team decisions and made after discussion and consideration for everyone's views. Some Councillors have lasted the term and others, for various reasons, have left. It's not always an easy role to fulfil and certainly has altered over the years. We are not Dibley and never will be, there is much to do and with more responsibility being devolved by Wiltshire Council, workload is likely to increase. Combine this with the less charitable members of our community who chose to create splinter groups and spread rumour, gossip and to be divisive and it's small wonder that this election on 1st May which should have seen a new set of faces around this table resulted in only one nomination. What will actually happen to our Parish Council hangs in the balance. Will Dauntsey lose its autonomy and become part of a neighbouring Parish? Is this the future for our community? Personally, I have served for 23 years and enjoyed so much of it, but it's time to move on and for younger folk to move Dauntsey forward and represent our needs to the wider audience.

So there we have it. Another year goes by.

MIN 4. Parish Council's Budget 2025-2026:

A copy of the Parish Council's Budget proposals for the year 2025/2026 was circulated to those in attendance.

The Council had raised its Budget for Year 25/26 from £23,500.00 to £25,500.00 by the inclusion of £2,000.00 towards costs of the Parish Council Elections to be held in May 2025, as Wiltshire Council would now be charging for this. This had increased the Band D Council Tax charge from £88.92 to £97.57 per year.

There were no questions raised.

MIN 5. Reports from Parish Council Sub Groups and Committees:

- a) **Recreation Ground Facilities** – Cllr Graeme Wood was pleased to report that the improvements at the Recreation Ground were now completed and he hoped

that people were now enjoying the facilities. The Council had been successful in securing several grants towards the works and in time a sign would be erected thanking all. It was hoped that an official opening could take place perhaps in partnership with the School.

MIN 6. Reports from Local Organisations:

- a) **Dauntsey Vale Link Scheme** – Theresa Chapman presented a brief report on the financial year 2024 including data on tasks that had been carried out assisting individuals in the community with 23 volunteer drivers giving many hours of their time. Surprisingly, no drivers came from Dauntsey Parish. The Link Scheme continued to cover the villages of Brinkworth (including Grittenham), Christian Malford, Dauntsey and Foxham and they were very keen to recruit more volunteer car drivers, particularly from Brinkworth and Dauntsey. There are Volunteer Co-ordinators who take phone calls and match requests with drivers and book these onto the computer system and perhaps these roles may interest people who cannot be drivers. The Link Scheme is intended to reduce need, hardship or distress of the poor, sick, elderly, disabled or anyone facing difficulties, primarily driving Clients to appointments at hospitals, doctors, shops, hairdressers and community social events. The service remains totally funded by donations from their Clients and she was pleased to report that their reserves were sufficient to continue during 2025 without requesting any Parish Council support.
- b) **Dauntsey Phoenix CIC** – Margi Histed, Chair of the CIC, was unable to attend and Ellen Blacker, a Board Member, presented a brief report on ongoing activities and reminded all that The Dauntsey Pump was published and delivered free of charge to all properties in Dauntsey being funded by revenue from advertisements, donations and by a grant from the Parish Council. Thanks to this the Company was in a much more favourable position than reported last year following the rise in printing costs and advertising revenue dropping but with a new team in place this had brought new energy to their endeavours. However, there is still a need to be wary and more advertisers would be welcomed so that there can be continuing improvement in the quality of production. Of course there was the necessity for more and more articles of interest to be submitted for inclusion. They would once again run the Decorated Wheelbarrow Competition for the Parish Council who donates some of the prize money. As always they are very grateful to all their supporters and the hard work of their distributors.
- c) **St James the Great PCC Churchwarden Report 2025** – Cecil Smith was unable to attend but had provided a written report that advised that during the year there had been 28 services including 2 joint services, 14 of Tony's morning prayer services, 2 Baptisms, 1 funeral at the grave side, 1 burial of ashes in the Remembrance Garden and 1 wedding. Their Christmas services still go from strength to strength. He gave thanks to Julian for organising the 9 lessons and the readers. The service attracted 8 children and 95 adults. Margie Histed again, organised her wonderful choir with help from their brilliant conductor/organist Nick and his daughter. They also owed a great deal of thanks to Brinkworth Earl Danby School and their Head Mistress for their lovely performance. The Christmas morning service was very successful as always, in attendance were 20 children who participated in the sermon and 130 adults. Thanks were given to Ann and Tony for organising the service.

The composting toilet was now complete and up and running in the new graveyard with many thanks given to Rev Steve for his help in making this happen. Many thanks were also given to Ann who was a great help to Cecil

throughout the year and for the help of Nicki, Tor and Ann's gardeners. Throughout the year the Church had had a beautiful display of flowers, our thanks go to Caroline and the team for this. Christopher had been a real support with the Church windows, upkeep of the building and again supplied our lovely Christmas tree. Thanks were also given to Jonathan for all his help throughout the year with keeping their accounts in order. As this would be Jonathan's last year, Cecil took this opportunity to thank him for all of his dedicated work over the past years, it has been invaluable.

Mary, their Church secretary, had done a superb job in keeping the Churchwardens' up-to-date throughout the year and a big thank you was given to Ann and her family for always hosting the meetings and providing refreshments, they were always appreciated. A special thank you was given to Helen Eggleton for all her work on the pews and pulpit, they looked fantastic and thanks to Emma for organising our Church cleaning. In closing he also gave thanks to others including Steve, Mike, Christian, all our Clergy, Maggie and Christina in the Woodbridge office.

There were no further Reports received.

MIN 7. Report from Wiltshire Council Representative:

Wiltshire Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall was in attendance and reported on Wiltshire Council matters. She was delighted to report that the Council's finances are sound, and that careful oversight continued to support the delivery and management of the wide range of services performed by the Council. This was despite the recent loss of £9m Rural Delivery Grant from the government.

In Children's services, performance had been strong and the Ofsted inspection in September resulted in an Outstanding grade which reflected the significant investment in a preventative family support approach. The Special Educational Needs service was also rated as Outstanding.

She held a portfolio in Adult Social Care, the sector which represented the highest percentage spend for the Council and a statutory activity. The 2% Adult Social Care Levy will raise £7m and will help to fund the £20m inflation and demand growth. This year the CQC inspection had awarded Wiltshire a Good rating, and no other council had yet achieved higher - with the acknowledgement that staff go 'above and beyond' to support people in the community. She had been impressed by the teams working in this sector and their innovative and preventative approach to service delivery – and she knew that they are all ambitious to improve even further.

Wiltshire Council had not had to close any libraries or leisure centres and was investing in them to support the health and wellbeing of all residents with a wide range of activities.

The Environment Act 2021 will require Waste Services to make substantial changes over the next three years, including the separate weekly collection of food waste from August 2027. Councils must also reach a target of 60% recycling by 2030, so additional changes will need to be made to the kerbside collection of recyclable materials

People were often unaware of the huge range of services provided by the Council, but everyone uses the roads in one form or another and the Council had added an additional £20m of funding over two years as they were determined to improve the quality of the road network. Additional funding of £1m for highways preventative flood

maintenance was added in 24/25 and this now formed part of the base budget allowing this enhanced service level to continue.

Personally, she thought it will take more than two years of additional funding to get roads back up to a good standard and she was always pushing to ensure this area gets a fair allocation of all highway maintenance funding. She commented that there are some good roads; and the work at Lyneham Banks was magnificent and she was delighted at the work on the Brinkworth Road- and that Seagry Road was now open, and the work can proceed at Great Somerford. She asked that people do keep reporting potholes through MyWilts – She reported two she had encountered recently, and they were repaired within a week – so it did work (although they have to reach the criteria for size and depth).

Planning was a big concern as the Government had determined that Wiltshire should provide 81% more houses than originally planned for, rising to 3,476 per annum. This, combined with a dramatic fall in housebuilding activity in recent months had meant that we do not have a Five Year Housing Land Supply, and leaves the County vulnerable to speculative development in unplanned areas. At the same time renewable energy schemes were being prioritised and the bases on which to object weakened. While the proposal for a solar farm near Dauntsey Lock was refused by committee, it may well go to appeal. Also Lime Down might not be next door but it would probably bring more construction traffic to the area if approved as well as potentially worsening the flood risks. Wiltshire Council's Cabinet issued a statement strongly opposing the plans for Lime Down.

These policy changes, together with the removal of farming subsidies and tax reliefs, is putting more pressure on our farms and the countryside which was such an important part of our communities. The future was full of battles that will need to be fought but we must stay strong to preserve the unique character of our communities and allow them to flourish.

Dauntsey has had specific issues - of which flooding had been the most damaging. We are awaiting the final report on Storm Babet which will propose some mitigation measures. She had spent a lot of time this year walking across fields around the Dauntsey Vale with the officer preparing this - to protect him from fierce local farmers and to examine the culverts and watercourses.

She had had confirmation today that National Highways had confirmed funding for work to the South of the M4 in 25/26 and a slight overspill into 26/27. This was great news, but we will have to wait for the exact details of what is to be done. At the same time, Nic Puntis had been told that National Highways will follow up on her complaints that the M4 ditches which we were told had been cleared are still congested with established vegetation. It seemed to her that work on these could transform the situation at The Green and near Evergreen Farm.

She had been chasing the Environment Agency over the pollution incident at Old Sodom Lane where kerosene had been leaking into the Brook. While they had put down a boom to contain the spills and absorbent pads to remove it, they had yet to find the source – which was frustrating.

Speeding traffic remained a problem common to all the rural villages in the Brinkworth Division – She had raised David Bullard's suggestion that ASW data is used with both the PCC and the Chief Constable. She had also been chasing up the issues with processing the SID data and had contacted the new man who was taking on this department and he hoped to have things in order soon. Our Neighbourhood Policing Team are very helpful and will carry out speed enforcement when they can on request.

Finally, she wanted to add her thanks to all those who had served on the Parish Council for their hard work for the community and in particular to the Chair and Clerk.

She answered a number of questions raised by the attendees and was thanked for her attendance.

MIN 8. Public Questions and General Discussion of Parish Issues:

- a) **Dauntsey Community Award Scheme – Future Years** – As agreed at last year's APM the scheme was still a good idea and that the community would need to become involved in the future with the Award Scheme. This was publicised in The Pump, but no volunteers had come forward.
- b) **Dauntsey Community Emergency Plan** – Although the Plan was in place there still needed to be a Community Co-ordinator volunteer found to lead a local team. This remained important as it had still proved impossible to find Flood wardens to cover all 5 areas of the Parish despite so many requests. The Emergency Plan therefore remained incomplete in regard to the "flooding" element as committed volunteers were required to fill roles. This had been publicised in The Pump, but no volunteers had come forward.
- c) **CPRE Best Kept Village Competition 2025** – The Parish Council at the request of those attending the 2024 APM entered the 2024 Competition. As before the result was embarrassing. A general discussion took place on the merits of entering. Despite the suggestion in 2024 that there was a need to raise the profile within the Parish and attendees agreeing to visit their local areas and spread the word about general upkeep, appearance and litter picking and publicising in The Pump there had been no improvement.
- d) **Dauntsey Wheelbarrow Competition 2025** – It was confirmed that the 2025 Competition would take place, with judging to be in mid-July. This year's theme was to be "Your Favourite Book". Details would be published in The Parish Pump and on social media.
- e) **Defibrillator and First Aid Training** – The Parish Council defibrillator project allowed for a S W Ambulance Trust yearly training session. Through lack of interest there would be a need to hold a joint session held with neighbouring Parishes.
- f) **Keep Britain Tidy-Litter Pick 2025** – As usual the Council had received Keep Britain Tidy information and there was a need to ensure that the Parish was regularly litter picked. Volunteers would be required to organise litter picks throughout the Parish.
- g) **Community Flood Wardens** – Following last year's APM, despite continual requests a Community Flood Warden and deputies for the five Parish Hubs had not been found. As before unless a committed team was formed there could be no progress on a Flood Plan and work on the ground keeping an eye on potential problem areas. This would be publicised in The Pump again and by word of mouth.
- h) **Traffic Speeds/Autospeedwatch/SIDs/Signage/CommunitySpeedwatch** – The Parish Council had continued to invest in Autospeedwatch and the SIDs. There was a shortage of volunteers to help and thanks were given to David Bullard for his continuing efforts.

- i) **Community Rights of Way Wardens** – The Parish Council still sought volunteers for these roles. Cllr Andrew Bond had continued in the Co-ordinator role, but others were still required to walk the Paths to identify problems and report them to him.
- j) **Recreation Ground Facilities** – Cllr Graeme Wood had reported earlier in the Meeting on the successful completion of the new works and he was thanked for his efforts. Ideas would be welcomed for future improvements.
- k) **Neighbourhood Watch/Community Safety** – The Parish Council still ran the electronic database for local distribution of Community Messaging and the like and all were welcome to join on a GDPR controlled basis. Simply Email the Council Clerk for inclusion. There was still a need to find a Parish Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator.
- l) **B4069 Road Closure – Re-opening** - Following the re-opening, requests should be made for the reinstatement of the diversion route surfaces and verges and also for the retention of the 40mph speed limit in Sodom Lane. In addition for the extension of the Dauntsey Lock 40mph speed limit to past the Swallett Gate corner.
- m) **Brinkworth Earl Danby's Lower School Parking** – There was overwhelming support for parking improvements at peak times. Bad parking created annoyance and safety issues. The School together with Police action needed to solve this problem for the benefit of local people.
- n) **Parish Council Database** – The Parish Council still ran the electronic database for local distribution of Community Messaging and the like and all were welcome to join on a GDPR controlled basis. Simply Email the Council Clerk for inclusion.
- o) **Parish Council & Unitary Council Elections** – These would take place on the 1st May 2025. As people knew, most of the existing Parish Council Members were standing down and there was a need for new people to come forward to serve a 4 year term.
- p) **Parish Council Vote of Thanks** – Theresa Chapman proposed a vote of thanks to all Council Members for their hard work and commitment, often over many years, to the Dauntsey community and wished them well in their retirement.
- q) **Malmesbury Surgery Patients Participation Group** – Cecil Smith had represented Dauntsey Parish on the PPGroup for many years. Andrew Chapman gave a personal thanks to Cecil for his help he had provided to him in recent times.
- r) **Sodom Lane – Waste Bin** – Theresa Chapman reminded all that she had previously suggested that a waste bin be installed in Sodom Lane. Potential sites were discussed, and the Parish Council would consider this further.

CLOSURE OF MEETING:

The Parish Council Chairman thanked all those who had attended the Annual Parish Meeting and closed the Meeting at 21.45pm.

Signed:

Councillor:

Date: